

HOUSE BILL 2418

By Moore

AN ACT to enact the "Helping Heroes Act of 2008" and to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 4, Part 9, relative to postsecondary financial assistance for veterans from net lottery proceeds.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 4, Part 9, is amended by adding the following language as a new, appropriately designated section:

§ 49-4-9__.

(a) The section shall be known and may be cited as the "Helping Heroes Act of 2008".

(b) As used in this section, unless the context otherwise requires:

(1) "Veteran" means a former member of the armed forces of the United States, or a former member of a reserve or Tennessee national guard unit who was called into active military service of the United States, as defined in § 58-1-102; and

(2) "Successful completion of a course" means that the student received a non-failing grade as the final grade for the course.

(c) To be eligible for a Helping Heroes Grant, a veteran shall:

(1) Have received an honorable discharge;

(2) Have been a Tennessee resident, as defined by regulations promulgated by the board of regents under §49-8-104, for one (1) year immediately preceding the date of application for a Helping Heroes Grant;

(3) Have been awarded:

(i) The Iraq Campaign Medal;

(ii) The Afghanistan Campaign Medal; or

(iii) On or after September 11, 2001, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal;

(4) Not be ineligible for a grant under § 49-4-904;

(5) Be admitted to and enroll in an eligible postsecondary institution seeking an associate or baccalaureate degree;

(6) Have not received a baccalaureate degree; and

(7) Make application for a Helping Heroes Grant for any semester in which the veteran successfully completes six (6) or more semester hours.

(d) A veteran who qualifies for a Helping Heroes Grant under this section shall not be required to meet any academic standard at the time of enrollment in an eligible postsecondary institution to be eligible to receive the grant.

(e) Award of a Helping Heroes Grant shall be made after the completion of a semester. If a student successfully completes twelve (12) or more semester hours, then the student shall receive the full amount of the grant as provided in subsection (f). If a student successfully completes six (6) to eleven (11) semester hours, then the student shall receive one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of the full grant. A student successfully completing fewer than six (6) semester hours in a semester shall not be eligible for the grant for that semester, but may subsequently be eligible for the grant in a semester in which the student successfully completes at least six (6) semester hours; provided, that the student meets all other eligibility requirements during that semester.

(f) Subject to the amounts appropriated by the general assembly and any provision of law relating to a shortfall in funds available for postsecondary financial assistance from the net proceeds of the state lottery, a Helping Heroes Grant awarded to a student shall be one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per semester for any semester during

the 2008-2009 academic year in which the student successfully completes twelve (12) or more semester hours. For academic years subsequent to the 2008-2009 academic year, the amount of such grant shall be determined in accordance with § 4-51-111 and shall be set in the general appropriations act.

(g) A student may receive a Helping Heroes Grant for a maximum of eight (8) semesters. In calculating the total number of semesters a student may receive a Helping Heroes Grant, semesters for which a student receives a Helping Heroes Grant and in which the student successfully completes six (6) to eleven (11) semester hours shall count as one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) semester in the total.

(h) A veteran shall be eligible for a Helping Heroes Grant for any semester for which the veteran meets all qualifications for the grant and which commences prior to the eighth anniversary of the veteran's honorable discharge from military service.

(i) A Helping Heroes Grant shall be awarded in addition to any other financial aid for which the recipient veteran qualifies.

(j) Helping Heroes Grants shall not be awarded for any semester prior to fall semester 2008.

SECTION 2. The provisions of this act shall not be construed to be an appropriation of funds and no funds shall be obligated or expended pursuant to this act unless such funds are specifically appropriated by the general appropriations act.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it, and shall apply to students seeking postsecondary financial assistance from net lottery proceeds for the 2008-2009 academic year and academic years thereafter.